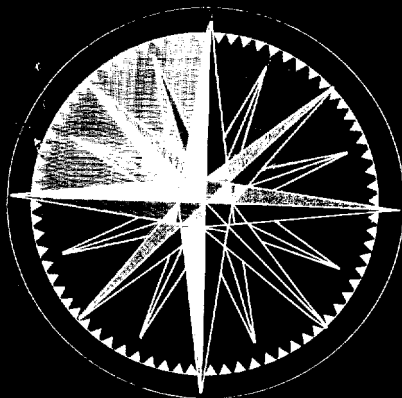


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# SPECIAL REPORT

ALGERIA UNDER BOUMEDIENNE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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ALGERIA UNDER BOUMEDIENNE

Three months after deposing President Ben Bella, the military-backed regime of Colonel Houari Boumedienne appears to be fully in control of Algeria. Despite recurring rumors of possible new coups, even Ben Bella's staunchest supporters have not been able to organize any substantial resistance to Boumedienne.

Boumedienne shuns publicity and has aroused little enthusiasm. He has been accepted by the Algerian people as a fact of life, however, and an atmosphere of confidence has replaced the pessimism and disillusionment Ben Bella had generated.

The new government so far has made little real progress toward solving Algeria's many problems, but is adopting a much-needed pragmatic approach. In contrast to Ben Bella's preoccupation with foreign adventures, major attention now is being given to heretofore neglected domestic affairs. The cool reaction of the Communist and radical Afro-Asian world to Ben Bella's overthrow has pushed Algeria closer to the true nonalignment which the former president espoused but seldom practiced.

The Ben Bella Regime

During his three-year tenure, Ben Bella had become a virtual dictator. Except for Boumedienne, whose support had secured power for him in 1962, Ben Bella had broken with nearly all of his preindependence colleagues. He dominated the political bureau of the National Liberation Front (FLN), the country's sole political party and policy-forming body. He had absorbed some ministries into the presidency and bypassed other ministers, notably Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Although he possessed considerable personal magnetism, his popularity faded as his government, concentrating on foreign policy issues,

made no noticeable progress in eliminating Algeria's major domestic difficulties.

Boumedienne, as defense minister and commander of the armed forces, had avoided the limelight and quietly concentrated on organizing, equipping, and training his military forces. His influence was noticeable, however, in the "Islamic" cast of Algeria's socialism. He and several of his closest collaborators were members of the FLN political bureau and the cabinet and he acted for Ben Bella when the latter was out of the country.

Probably egged on by Bouteflika--who was about to be

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dismissed [redacted]

[redacted], Boumedienne on 19 June seized Ben Bella and arrested at least five of the President's closest colleagues, assuming power in the name of a "national revolutionary council."

### The New Regime

Emphasizing collective responsibility, Boumedienne moved quickly to establish the three principal organs of his new regime--the Revolutionary Council, the FLN executive secretariat, and the cabinet. In setting up these organs, he made clear that they were to function separately. The military forces are heavily represented, but the army remains out of sight, and Boumedienne does not appear in uniform.

The Revolutionary Council, which Boumedienne heads, is the policy-making body. Thirteen of its 26 members are active army officers. Six of the others served on Boumedienne's staff during the war for independence and, although no longer active with the armed forces, retained their personal ties with him. Four more were guerrilla leaders during the revolution, and the remaining three are government personalities who were formerly considered "Ben Bellists" but rallied to the new regime. There has been little criticism of council members as such. Most of them have risen on merit and experience to major command responsibilities or have solid reputations in their own regions of Algeria. These regions are widely represented in the council.

The five-member FLN executive secretariat also has broad geographic representation. The group is charged with reorganizing and strengthening the party in preparation for a second FLN congress which, when held, is expected to deal with constitutional reform. Typical of the Boumedienne regime, the 20 July ceremony installing the new secretariat was a singularly dull and lifeless affair.

Boumedienne is drawing on the talents of wartime regional leaders to turn the FLN into an essentially "ward-level" party with emphasis on rural areas, a process that will take considerable time. There seems to be little room in the party for the urban intellectuals and ideologists so active within Ben Bella's version of the FLN. Missing also are the exchanges with foreign Communist groups, which had accelerated under Ben Bella. Boumedienne apparently intends to try to close the gap that had developed between party and public and work for greater homogeneity within the party itself. He will not allow it to interfere with the daily operations of the government or with foreign affairs, as it did under Ben Bella.

The function of the cabinet, which Boumedienne also heads, is to govern. Several ministers have obviously been selected for purely political reasons, but most cabinet members have either proved their capabilities or bring with them considerable professional experience. The ministries most involved in policy

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and internal control have been given to trusted Boumedienne colleagues. Boumedienne, of course, retains control over all military matters by holding onto the defense portfolio.

Boumedienne's close collaborator, Ahmed Medeghri, has returned to the Ministry of Interior, which Ben Bella had taken over a year before. Medeghri will be directly responsible for the national administrative apparatus, including training and placement of administrators both at the regional level--the prefects--and in the central government. A number of prefects have already been replaced or transferred. The prefects known to the US Embassy have impressed it as competent, experienced administrators who should be able to improve the caliber of local government.

Bouteflika has retained the Foreign Affairs Ministry and has emerged as the principal voice on foreign policy in the Revolutionary Council as well as within the cabinet. Ben Bella had gradually absorbed more and more of the substance of foreign affairs, and the ministry suffered from progressive disorganization and atrophy. Under Ben Bella, Bouteflika had brought into the ministry a few of his own followers, but many of the ministry's offices and Algerian embassies abroad were and still are staffed by Ben Bellists whose experience and ability will be hard to replace. Thus, Bouteflika must move slowly in forming his own team. Since the coup, there has been evidence of determination within the

ministry to lift it out of the chaos into which it had disintegrated.

The finance portfolio, which also had been assumed by Ben Bella, now has been given to another Boumedienne collaborator, Ahmed Kaid. Kaid is without professional qualification for his task, but is forceful, outspoken, and generally considered a "tough customer." His primary role would seem to be to deal firmly with the competing money demands of the other ministers, while leaving technicalities to the competent professionals. While in Washington last month to attend the International Monetary Fund meeting, Kaid discussed economic aid possibilities with US officials.

#### The Economy

One of the justifications for overthrowing Ben Bella was his mishandling of the economy. No bold new policies or drastic changes have occurred, however, and the regime seems to be concentrating largely on improving old methods. While continuing to espouse "socialism" as its goal, the regime's keynote seems to be "flexibility."

In his policy speech on the occasion of the investiture of the new cabinet on 12 July, Boumedienne was particularly vague on economic matters. "Our domestic policy," he said, "consists in... seeing to it that the nation's economy is built on solid foundations and in conformity with the nation's real possibilities...."

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Boumedienne has selected the able Abdesselam Belaid as minister of industry and energy. Belaid's major accomplishment to date is the conclusion of a petroleum and gas accord with France, under negotiation for some 20 months. Under this accord, governmental revenues from petroleum sources will more than triple in the next five years. At the same time, the regime is seeking to collect other revenues and encourage foreign investment --as well as to solicit foreign aid.

### Foreign Policy

There are no indications that the Boumedienne regime looks at the world from a notably different point of view than did Ben Bella. However, it appears less eager to involve Algeria in a variety of projects, programs, and contacts of little immediate practical value. Having set first priority on the conduct of domestic affairs, the regime probably considers foreign relations as a means to acquire the wherewithal to develop Algeria, hopefully without making undesirable political concessions or incurring risks. It seems to have no doctrinaire prejudices against any foreign country or group of countries, except Israel.

During the war for independence and under the Ben Bella regime, the Algerians divided foreign countries into three categories--the "brothers" (the Arabs and Africans), the "friends" (Communists), and the "others." Under Boumedienne relations with most Arab states have remained

correct and generally unchanged. On the whole, relations with Algeria's nervous Maghrebian neighbors--Morocco and Tunisia --are somewhat better than might have been anticipated in light of their rapport with Ben Bella and their apprehensions regarding Boumedienne's intentions. Boumedienne seems to have assured them that he has at least no immediate designs on their territory, and border problems are for the moment shelved by mutual consent.

Even under Ben Bella, however, the Algerians had become cool toward what they considered was "brother" Nasir's tendency to meddle in Algerian affairs. The new regime in turn resented Egypt's solicitude regarding Ben Bella following the coup, and relations remain strained.

Relations with Ben Bella's cronies, the radical African leaders in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali--who for obvious personal reasons disapprove of coups--are also strained. Conversely, relations with the moderate African regimes in West Africa have become somewhat more cordial, particularly as Algeria may be withdrawing support from some of those countries' dissidents. However, Boumedienne has publicly promised continued support to the revolutionary groups opposing the remaining colonial regimes.

The lack of warmth shown by some of the Communist "friends" has been particularly and even publicly noted by the new Algerian regime. Precipitate Chinese recognition was accepted by the

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Algerians as a gambit to ensure the holding of the Second Afro-Asian conference in June and brought no advantages when the meeting was postponed. Algerian-Chinese differences may be developing over the make-up and tone of the rescheduled November meeting.

Relations with Cuba have been in a kind of diplomatic limbo since Castro's strong attacks on the new regime and his pointed sarcasm leveled at Boumedienne. Havana's Prensa Latina has been allowed to reopen its Algiers office, closed on 29 June by the Algerians, but this is unlikely to improve the atmosphere materially.

Most of Algeria's military equipment and much of the Algerian military training come from the USSR, and Boumedienne realizes that Soviet economic aid and trade is important to economic development. State-to-state relations, therefore, remain correct, if not overly cordial. Meanwhile, Boumedienne continues to arrest Communist and pro-Communist critics and opponents of his regime who have been openly supported by foreign Communist organizations. The arrests have drawn criticism in the Moscow press.

As for the "others," French-Algerian relations seem to be excellent. Although most of the French press, the French left, and the French trade unionists

may regret Ben Bella's disappearance, French businessmen and the few French residents in Algeria do not. The new oil agreement, with its financial and technical assistance adjuncts, helps keep Algeria solidly in the French sphere of economic and cultural influence.

Representatives of other Western European countries are being more cordially received than they were in Ben Bella's day, although the new regime is not much more prompt in paying its debts. Mindful of the need for continued and expanded US economic aid, regime spokesmen, including Boumedienne himself, have indicated a desire for improved relations with the United States. The Algerian press, however, continues to be harshly critical of American policy in Vietnam. The regime has not budged from its view that the only proper solution to the Vietnam problem is US evacuation, transfer of power to the Liberation Front, and the unification of North and South Vietnam.

#### Outlook

Survival prospects for the Boumedienne regime look reasonably good. Boumedienne had already demonstrated considerable executive and administrative talent in turning a disorganized and motley collection of guerrilla fighters into a disciplined military organization. He is using the same direct tactics to

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instill efficiency into his administration, surrounding himself with a competent corps of administrators reflecting his drive and singleness of purpose.

While not appearing to have closed its doors to Marxists and the more flamboyant "third worlders," the regime has noted their initial negative reactions to the coup. They apparently are not to be given access to the party or key posts in the government, and their pet organizations, such as youth and student groups, are to be drastically overhauled. The regime also is apparently uninterested in making major concessions to the right. By thus narrowing his regime's base, Boumedienne appears to be widening the scope for potential opposition.

Inasmuch as he depends, even more than did Ben Bella, on the support of the army, Boumedienne may come to rely more heavily on his military collaborators to energize the administration, eliminate inefficiency and confusion, and reform the FLN and such other national organizations as labor, youth, and students.

Boumedienne probably will continue to place emphasis on domestic affairs. If, as seems likely, the scheduled Afro-Asian conference either is not held or is only a marginal success, he may become even more disinclined to become embroiled in large international gatherings. In any event, his principal rapport will remain with the Maghrebians, Arab, and African groupings.

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